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6 April 1962

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY



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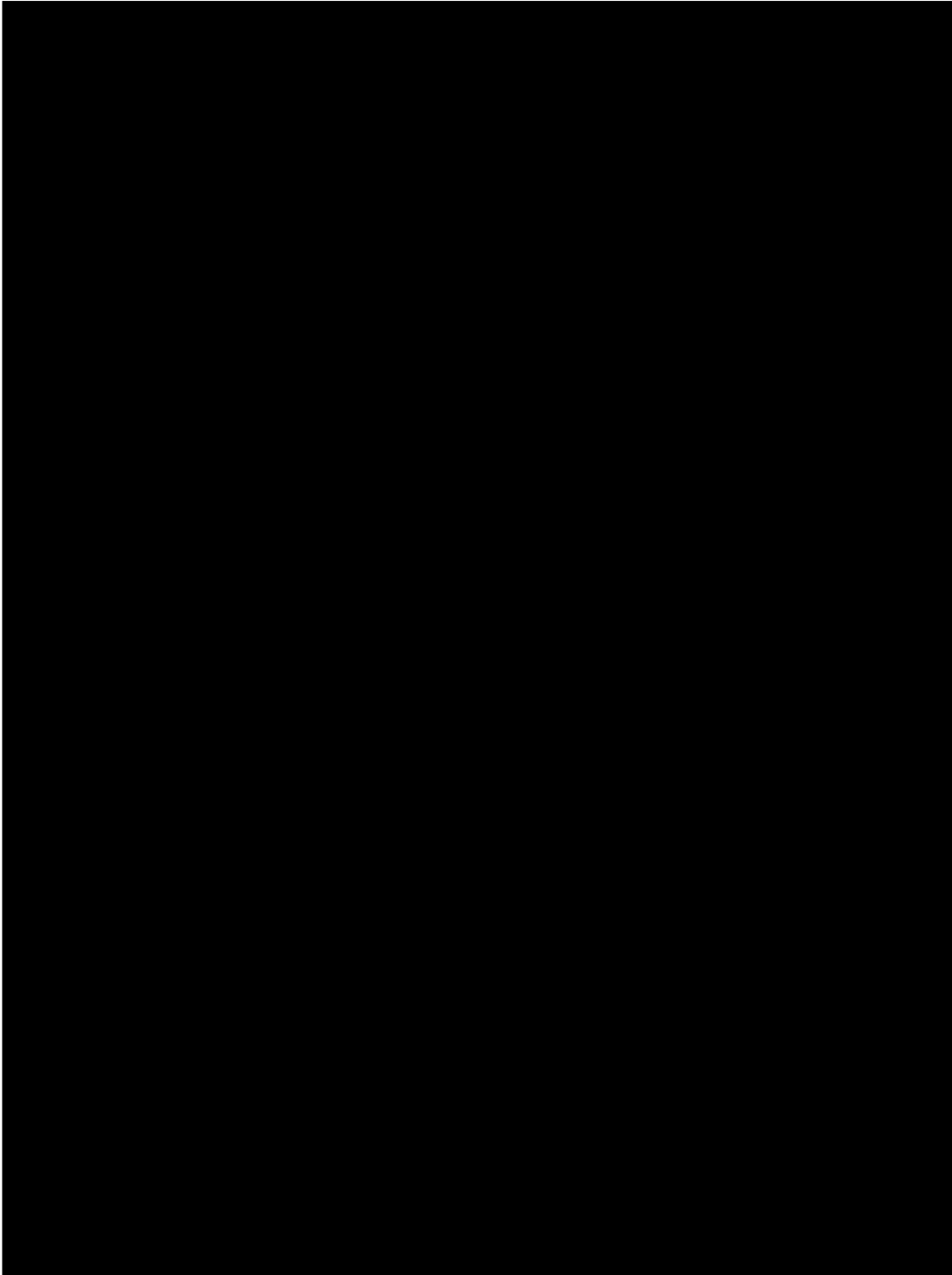
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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

6 April 1962

THE WEEK IN BRIEF
(Information as of 1200 EST 5 Apr)



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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

6 April 1962

MIDDLE EAST HIGHLIGHTS Page 9

The power struggle among Syrian military factions, which erupted this week into open rebellion, has temporarily abated following a compromise negotiated at Homs. Nasir, who initially appealed to Syrians to avoid civil war and offered his services as mediator between pro- and anti-Nasir factions, now charges Damascus with violating the Homs accord by trying to put "reactionary" officers back in control.

The Syrian-Israeli border situation remains tense, and further clashes are possible at any time.

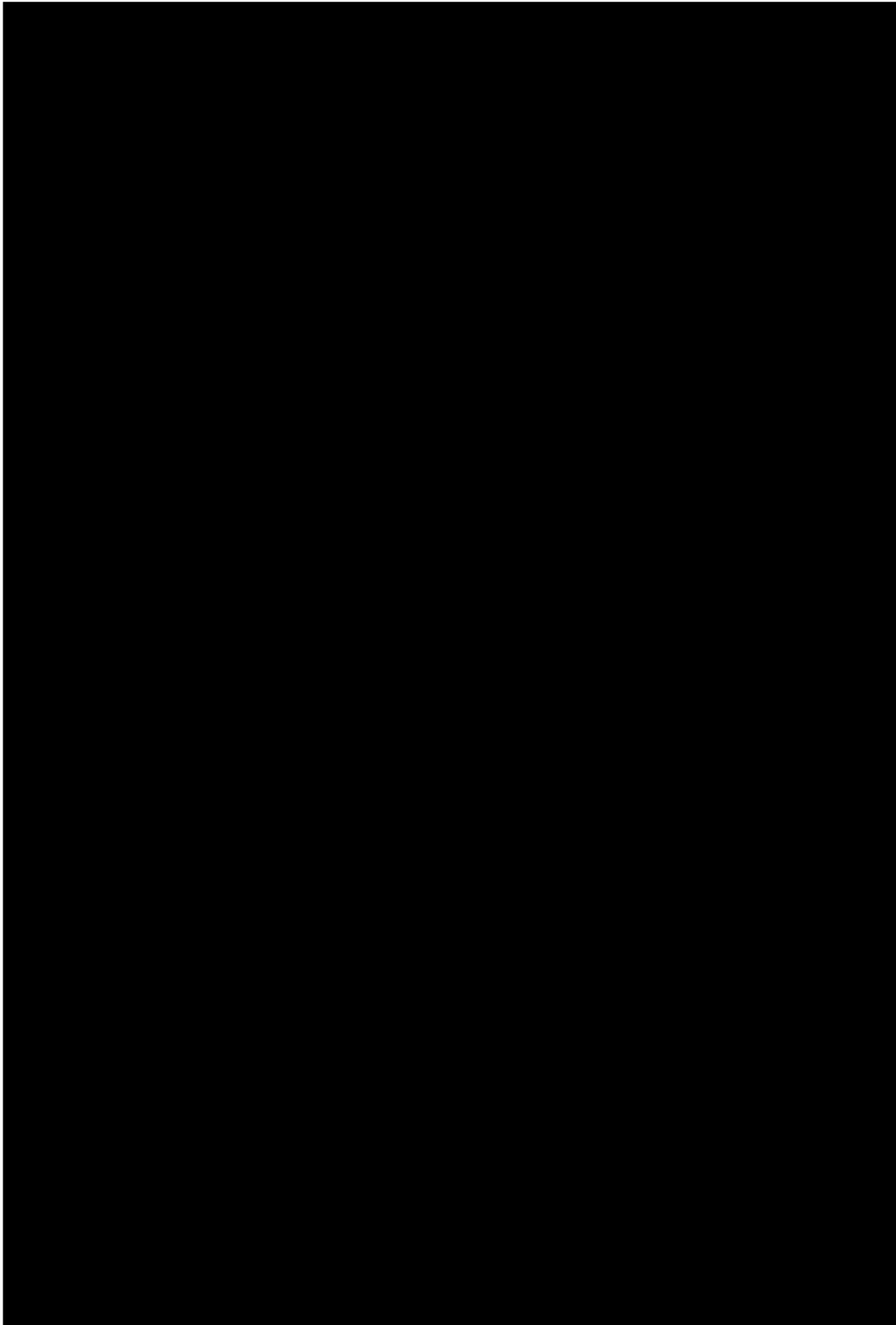
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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

6 April 1962



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iii

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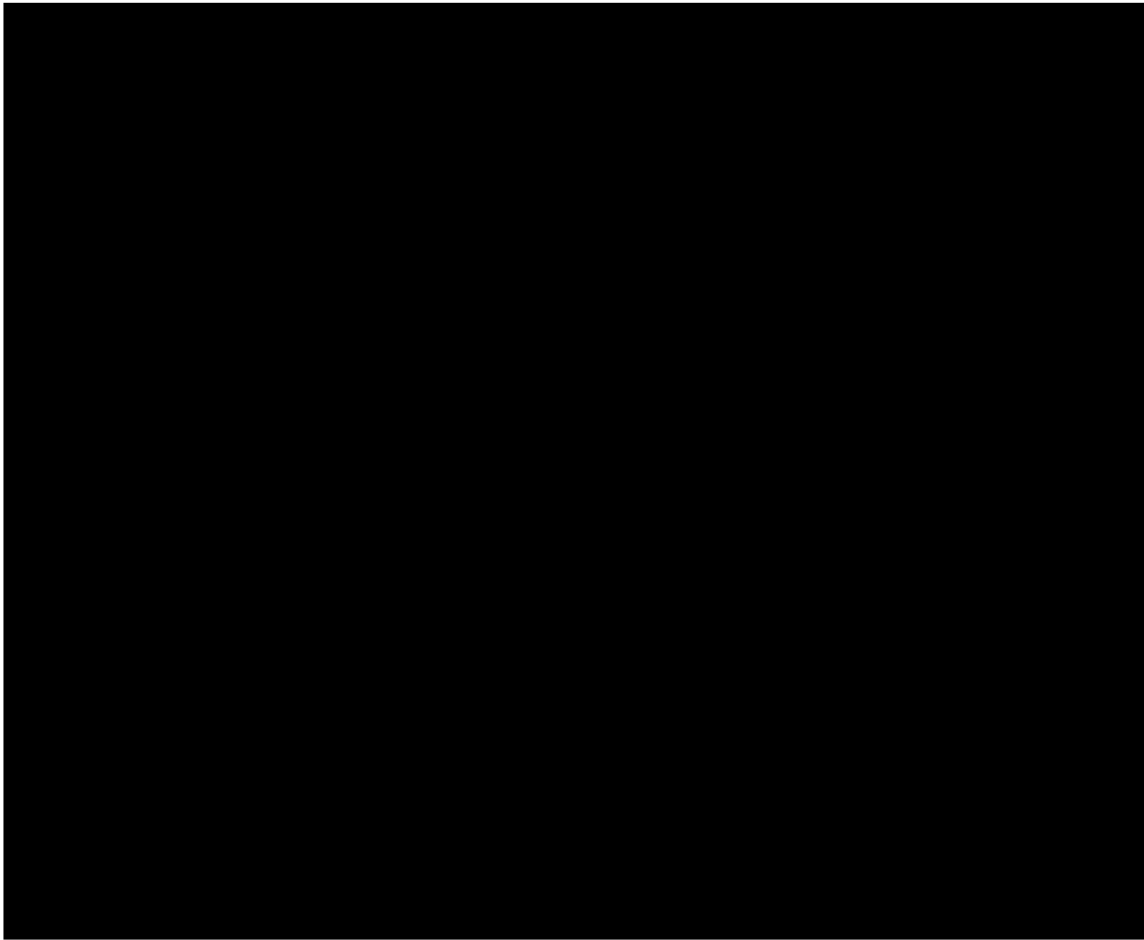
CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

6 April 1962



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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY



MIDDLE EAST HIGHLIGHTS

Syria

The power struggle among Syrian military elements, which erupted this week into open rebellion and near civil war, has abated temporarily following a compromise negotiated at Homs and reluctantly accepted by leaders of the pro-Nasir forces in Aleppo. On the afternoon of 3 April, Damascus radio announced that order had been restored and that the army

units and officers in Aleppo returned to their barracks. Officials in Damascus remain concerned about internal security in Aleppo and other northern cities, however, and are particularly apprehensive that pro-Nasir or Communist extremists will instigate new riots and clashes. The Syrian capital itself is still tense, as officers and politicians maneuver for control of the government.

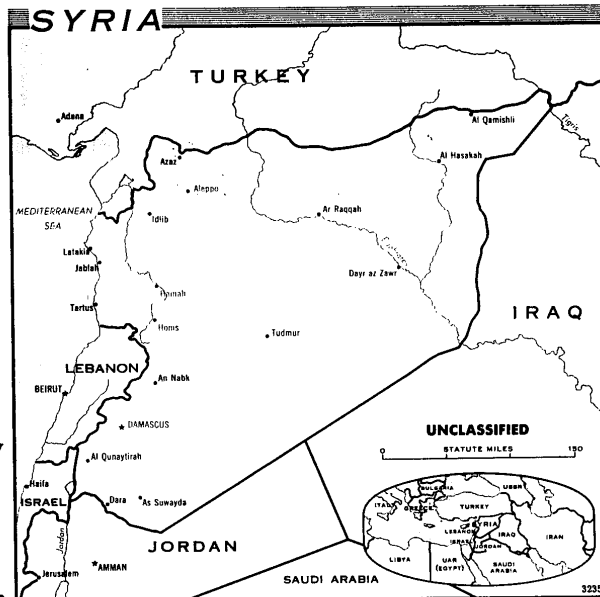
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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

The rebellion was touched off by the Syrian military command's displacement of the Qudsi-Dawalibi government and its seizure of direct power on 28 March. This action brought the command under immediate pressure both from a conservative officers' faction which supported the Qudsi regime and from a faction of radical, pro-Nasir officers. Units commanded by officers aligned with each of these groups were involved in fighting in the city of Homs on 31 March against tank forces sent by the military command from the Damascus area to put down disturbances there.

Riots and demonstrations against the military command also took place in Aleppo, Hamah, and Latakia. In Aleppo these were followed by a wave of violent clashes and shootings, and by early morning on 2 April pro-Nasir forces were in control of key points in the city, including the radio station. They proclaimed open rebellion against the military command in Damascus, appealed for the support of other Syrian military units, and demanded immediate reunification of Syria and Egypt.

The following day, however, the situation in Aleppo changed sharply. Damascus threatened air and ground attack unless the Aleppo rebels agreed to accept the provisions of the compromise accord worked out at Homs. The extremist commander of the Aleppo group was displaced by a more moderate officer. Cairo radio broadcast a statement by President Nasir appealing to Syrians to avoid civil war and making it clear that Egyptian forces would not be sent unless other outside forces intervened. As a result



of these shifts, an uneasy truce was arranged, and the rebels ceased their broadcasts.

The Homs agreement provides for a return to civilian government after a transitional period and for much closer relations--short of reunion--between Syria and Egypt. It also specifies an almost complete change in the structure and personnel of the military command. Seven members of the command--those who played some of the key roles in the army's assumption of power on 28 March and who apparently resisted the idea of a major rapprochement with Egypt--have already been sent out of the country.

Radio Cairo has already charged, however, that this part of the Homs agreement is being violated and that other "reactionary" officers who should have been exiled are maneuvering in Damascus to gain control. Thus it appears that the new

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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

command will become a focal point for renewed rivalries and the contest to control it may be settled only after a resumption of military strife. Radio Damascus on 4 April began propaganda counterattacks, accusing Cairo of "cheap fabrications" and "intrigues against the Syrian people."

The Soviet Government is probably pleased with the course of events in Syria. Moscow commented favorably on the 28 March assumption of power by the military command; the prospective changes in the command to give more representation to young, radical officers would--if implemented as planned--be regarded by Moscow as a further fortuitous shift. The sharp new cleavage between the pro-Nasir and the various anti-Nasir elements in Syria and the likelihood of a considerable period of intense political strife will probably provide unusual opportunities for the Communist party to increase its influence. The USSR has remained noncommittal while reporting demands of Syrian groups for reunification with Egypt and probably still regards the break-up of the UAR as favorable to longer range Soviet interests.

Israel-Syria

It is doubtful that recent events in Syria and the changes in the ruling military junta there will have much moderating effect on Israeli-Syrian border tensions. During the disturbances, the command in Damascus sought to rally the Syrian Army and the public by invoking the threat from Israel, claiming the Israelis were "massing troops on the border for a new aggression." There remains a possibility of some Syrian-initiated action along the border in a further effort by the reorganized junta to unify the country. In such an event the Israelis probably would respond even more vigorously than on 16-17 March. The Israelis claim the Syrians directed heavy machine gun fire on an "Israeli" area in the demilitarized zone on the night of 1-2 April. The fire apparently was not returned.

The UN Security Council continued to meet this week to discuss the respective complaints of Syria and Israel against each other. Any resolution by the Council which condemned Israel for retaliation while tending to depreciate the importance of Syrian "provocation" would be unlikely to deter the Israelis from taking further reprisals against harassment along the border. Israel, moreover, has warned that such a resolution would only embolden the Syrians.

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